out what can best be described as a valuable object lesson for those interested in scientific patronage and the public trust.

DAVID H. DEVORKIN

G. F. C. Searle. *Oliver Heaviside, the Man.* Edited by **Ivor Catt.** 79 pp. St. Albans/New Fairfield, Conn.: C. A. M. Publishing, 1987. £12, $24. (Photo-offset from typescript.)

This is a curious little book about a very curious man. Oliver Heaviside was a self-taught electrical theorist who emerged in the 1880s and 1890s as one of the leading expositors of Maxwell's theory and the unrivaled master of its application to telegraphy. He was also, in the words of his friend G. F. C. Searle, "a first-rate oddity"—though, Searle hastened to add, "never a mental invalid."

In 1950 the Institution of Electrical Engineers asked Searle, a retired Cambridge physicist, to write a sketch of his friend to mark the hundredth anniversary of Heaviside's birth. Searle wrote two brief pieces for the IEE's *Heaviside Centenary Volume* and also prepared a much longer essay that was intended for separate publication but never appeared.

The British electrical engineer Ivor Catt recently unearthed this typescript under "romantic circumstances" (which he does not recount) and has now published it. Although Catt calls it "the only lengthy Heaviside biography," it is really more a collection of reminiscences than a true biography, and in any case it has been superseded by Paul Nahin's very thorough *Oliver Heaviside: Sage in Solitude* (New York: IEE, 1988; reviewed in *Isis*, 1989, *80*:322–324). But Searle's recollections, and his extracts from otherwise lost letters of Heaviside's, give this little volume considerable interest.

Searle deliberately focused on Heaviside "the man" rather than on his scientific work. Most of Searle's stories date from the long period of declining health and increasing eccentricity that led up to Heaviside's death in Torquay in 1925, and we learn far more about Heaviside's precarious finances and his feuds with his relatives than about electromagnetic theory. But as Searle himself wrote (p. 3), those who want to know about Heaviside's work "can get his books and can read them and understand them, if they can." Those who want a glimpse of his unusual personality can and should read Searle's account.

BRUCE J. HUNT

David B. Wilson. *Kelvin and Stokes: A Comparative Study in Victorian Physics.* xvi + 253 pp., illus., index. Bristol: Adam Hilger, 1987. (Distributed by Taylor & Francis, Philadelphia.) $95.

David Wilson has previously performed yeoman service for the history of physics by cataloguing the large Stokes and Kelvin archives at University Library, Cambridge. He has also edited the Stokes–Kelvin correspondence, more than 650 letters that constitute a half-century-long dialogue between the reigning authorities of Victorian mathematical physics. Now he has launched an interpretive overview of the similarities and differences between their careers. Four categories structure the comparison: institutional location, interaction of religion and methodology, theories of the luminiferous ether, and scientific personae. The categories are well chosen. They point up the diversity of subject matter involved in the history of physics, and Wilson's treatment suggests how that diversity comes to bear on internal content. Does it actually matter to their mathematical physics that William Thomson (Lord Kelvin from 1892) identified his career with Glasgow while George Gabriel Stokes committed himself to Cambridge? Does it matter that they both believed in miracles? Wilson answers yes on both counts and points to major consequences.

The project is laudable. Yet while fully appreciating its aims, I nevertheless have reservations about the manner of its execution and the specific conclusions that emerge. For example, from an enumeration of subjects traditionally taught in the largely qualitative Glasgow natural philosophy course versus those included in the Cambridge mathematical tripos, Wilson infers that Thomson's search for a unifying energy physics owed more to Glasgow, where he studied the physical subjects of heat, electricity, and magnetism, than to Cambridge, where he studied the mathematization of mechanics, optics, hydrodynamics, and astronomy. Stokes, on the other hand, because his research was shaped by the mathematical tripos, did not exhibit Thomson's drive for a unified physics. This neat institutional explanation